

Congressman Sestak Leads Charge for Increased Funding for Pediatric Cancer Research and Treatment

Caucus Led by Sestak Urges Full Funding of the Conquer Childhood Cancer Act

WASHINGTON, DC – March 7, 2009, Pediatric Cancer Caucus Chair Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07), joined by 48 members of Congress, sent a letter urging the Appropriations Committee to include \$30 million for pediatric cancer research in the FY 2011 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill. Legislation that the Congressman co-sponsored and that was signed into law in 2008 authorizes the funding, which is used to expand pediatric cancer research and inform doctors and families about treatment options. Congressman Sestak also announced the introduction of a resolution recognizing September 13th as National Childhood Cancer Awareness Day, in conjunction with original co-sponsor and Pediatric Caucus Co-Chair Representative Michael McCaul.

“From my daughter’s continued battle with cancer, I know all too well its impact on children and families,” said Congressman Sestak. “We have been incredibly lucky, but too many children are lost every year to cancer and those who survive face dire after- effects of their treatment.”

The Caroline Price Walker Conquer Childhood Cancer Act, which became law in 2008, provides for the additional funding for research on pediatric cancer and treatment, a grant program that better disseminates information on best practices and connects children with best treatments for their cancers, and investments in epidemiological tracking of pediatric cancer. It is named in honor and memory of former Representative Deborah Pryce’s daughter Caroline, who passed away in 1999 at age nine from Neuroblastoma. In 2009, the Pediatric Cancer Caucus secured \$4 million for pediatric cancer and research as well as a commitment from the National Institutes of Health to ensure other cancer funding is available for pediatric cancer research.

“I am glad to see such broad bipartisan support for this research, which will allow more children with cancer to enjoy full and healthy lives, so that more families can be as fortunate as mine. I look forward to working with the Pediatric Cancer Caucus to continue bringing attention to the needs of children with cancer.”

With nearly 15,000 new cases diagnosed each year, cancer is the leading cause of death by disease in children, cutting short the lives of more children under the age of 20 than any other disease. While long-term survival rates for pediatric cancer are fairly high -- 1 child out of 5 who is diagnosed with cancer dies from it -- 3 out of 5 children suffer from long-term side effects.

The other Members signing the letter were Representatives Michael Arcuri, Tammy Baldwin, Melissa Bean, Shelley Berkley, Howard Berman, Colin Peterson, Russ Carnahan, André Carson, Emmanuel Cleaver, Steve Cohen, Joe Courtney, Danny Davis, Diana Degette, Bill Delahunt, Lloyd Doggett, Sam

Graves, Raúl Grijalva, Luis Gutierrez, Maurice D. Hinchey, Walter B. Jones, Dale Kildee, Mary Jo Kilroy, Peter King, Leonard Lance, Robert E. Latta, Christopher John Lee, Blaine Luetkemeyer, Stephen Lynch, Carolyn Maloney, Betsy Markey, Eric Massa, Michael McCaul, James McGovern, Charlie Melancon, Dennis Moore, James Moran, James Oberstar, William Owens, Janice Schakowsky, Allyson Schwartz, Bobby Scott, Jackie Speier, Betty Sutton, Chris Van Hollen, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Charles Wilson, and David Wu.

See the text of the letter below:

Honorable David Obey
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
B-2358 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Labor, Health & Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We write today to respectfully request that you provide full funding for the Caroline Pryce Walker Conquer Childhood Cancer Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-285, 122 Stat. 2628-2631) in the FY2011 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. We believe that this funding is essential to provide effective, widespread and speedy research to help eradicate the cancers that plague our nation's youth.

As you may know, The Caroline Pryce Walker Conquer Childhood Cancer Act is named in honor and memory of former Representative Deborah Pryce's daughter Caroline, who passed away in 1999 at age nine from Neuroblastoma. This authorization bill enjoyed bipartisan support, passing the House unanimously 416-0, and passing the Senate by unanimous consent. The House Appropriations Committee included \$10 million for this authorization in the House-Passed FY10 Labor-HHS Appropriations Act, however, only 4 million was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act.

The Caroline Pryce Walker Conquer Childhood Cancer Act calls upon the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Director of NIH and other Federal agencies with an interest in prevention and treatment of pediatric cancer to continue to enhance, expand, and intensify pediatric cancer research and other activities related to pediatric cancer, including therapeutically applicable research to generate effective treatments, pediatric preclinical testing and pediatric clinical trials through National Cancer Institute-supported pediatric cancer clinical trial groups and their member institutions. This research, and the treatments it will help to develop, will allow children with cancer the opportunity to enjoy full and healthy lives.

The Act also authorizes grants to childhood cancer professional and direct service organizations for the expansion of activities that provide information on treatment protocols to ensure early access to the best available therapies and clinical trials for pediatric cancers. Ensuring that children get the best type of treatment as soon as possible is especially important for pediatric cancer both because children and adolescents are much more vulnerable to the side effects of these treatments and because they have the ability to recover fully if they get the right treatment. Additionally, these grants would also be used to provide information on the late effects of pediatric cancer treatment to ensure access to necessary long-term medical and psychological care, specialized education resources for school reentry and postsecondary education and other support services.

Additionally, this legislation authorizes the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to award a grant to enhance and expand existing infrastructure to track the epidemiology of pediatric cancer into a comprehensive nationwide registry of pediatric cancer cases.

As you are aware, each year cancer kills more children between 1 and 20 years of age than asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, and AIDS, combined. Because of research in pediatric cancer, up to 75 percent of the children with cancer can now be cured. However, despite significant improvements in our ability to fight pediatric cancer, some types continue to lack effective treatment and thousands of children still lose their bouts with cancer. Indeed, cancer remains the leading cause of death by disease in children. It is with these children in mind that we seek your support in securing this much needed funding for FY2011.

Thank you again for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you the Appropriations Committee and appreciate your support for eradicating this devastating disease.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, the Congressman was the first Director of Deep Blue, the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the Global War on Terrorism. He served as President Clintons Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Congressman Sestak is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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Source: www.sestak.house.gov

